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SUBJECT: UN: FIFTH COMMITTEE TO CONSIDER 2006 BUDGET FOR SPECIAL POLITICAL MISSIONS

¶1. On March 20 the Fifth Committee will begin its consideration of the budgets for Special Political Missions (SPMs) for 2006. In its resolution 60/248 of December 2005, the General Assembly endorsed the recommendation of the ACABQ and approved a charge of \$100 million against SPMs until the end of April 2006. The temporary provision was made given the late submission of the SPM budget in December 2005, which prevented the GA's full consideration of the budget proposal. Presently, a total of \$303 million is sought to finance 29 SPMs in 2006. This figure is expected to increase later in 2006 given that four missions, including the Afghanistan mission (UNAMA), are not budgeted for a full year and will require additional resources upon revision of their respective mandates.

¶2. As detailed in the report of the Secretary-General (A/60/585), the provision for SPMs in the preliminary estimate for the 2006-2007 biennium budget was set at \$355,949,300. Of this amount, a total of \$303,351,600 is being sought for 2006. This includes only partial funding for the Group of Experts on the DRC, UNAMA, the Group of Experts on Cote d'Ivoire, and the International Independent Investigation in Lebanon. The mandates for these four missions expire before the end of 2006 and additional funding will be sought for these activities when the Security Council extends their mandates. It is expected that the mandate for UNAMA will be considerably expanded in light of the recent report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan.

¶3. The SG's report highlights efforts being made to achieve complementarities and synergies between and among SPMs and other UN activities and locations. Thematic exchanges and dialogue are encouraged between SPMs and other relevant bodies (on issues such as sanctions, arms trafficking, etc.). Efforts are also made, where possible, to achieve administrative and logistical efficiencies through sharing of premises and logistical support from peacekeeping missions. Comment: The SG's report does not identify the level of savings achieved from this and USUN will seek further information in this regard. End comment.

¶4. During the 2004-2005 biennium, the appropriation for SPMs was \$391,554,800 and the estimated expenditure was \$321,642,600, representing an under-expenditure of more than \$71 million. A large part of this underexpenditure was due to higher than planned vacancy rates; the underspending is attributable to military contingents (\$11.3 million), international staff (\$27.9 million) and air transportation (\$12 million). The requirement of 3,085 total posts for 2006 reflects a decrease of 266 posts, inclusive of a reduction of 142 international posts. This is largely attributable to the expected closure of UNOTIL this spring.

¶5. The ACABQ is expected to support most of the Secretary-General's request, with perhaps a few reductions in

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posts and a five percent reduction in travel and consultancy budgets. The ACABQ is also expected to recommend that greater efforts be made to reduce travel requirements (through the use of videoconferencing, for example), and that future reports on SPMs indicate thematic or regional clusters to allow for greater consideration of possible complementarities and potential for synergies.

¶6. As highlighted by the ACABQ, the report provides little information to allow for analysis of resource changes. The current request of \$303 million represents a sizable increase from the previous biennium's level of expenditure, but the report offers little conclusive information on the mission-specific and overall reasons for the current increases, particularly given the overall decrease of staff requirements. USUN intends to seek further clarification in this regard.

BOLTON